



Magic realism in select novels of Salman Rushdie

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Abstract

Sir Ahmed Salman Rushdie is an Indian British and American novelist. His themes constitutes magic realism with allegory, history, religion, politics and displacement issues. His fiction primarily deals with connections, disruptions, and migrations between Eastern and Western civilizations, typically set on the Indian subcontinent. Central to this is the fantasy that the children born at midnight on the day of independence have special destiny as well as miraculous powers. Saleem, born at the stroke of that hour embodies the disasters of India-his very face resembles the map of partitioned India. Saleem's life covers the period from Independence to the lifting of the Emergency, but charming spots of bygone time are also visible through the "open sesame" of the perforated bedsheet.

Keywords: Salman Rushdie, indian british american novelist, magic realism, allegory, history, religion

Introduction

Historical representation in select novels of Salman Rushdie

Sir Ahmed Salman Rushdie is an Indian British and American novelist. His themes constitutes magic realism with allegory, history, religion, politics and displacement issues. His fiction primarily deals with connections, disruptions, and migrations between Eastern and Western civilizations, typically set on the Indian subcontinent. Rushdie's second novel, *Midnight's Children* (1981), won the Booker Prize in 1981 and was awarded to be "the best novel of all winners" on two occasions, marking the 25th and the 40th anniversary of the prize.

After his fourth novel, *The Satanic Verses* (1988), Rushdie became the subject of several assassination attempts and death threats because of what was seen by some to be an irreverent depiction of Muhammad. This included a fatwa calling for his death issued by Ruhollah Khomeini, the supreme leader of Iran. Rushdie uses fable, fairy-tale, fantasy or the allegorical mode for the projection of political satire. His works allegory operates philosophically by making people understand the dark reality symbolized in India, psychologically exploring the self-identity and politically. His novel talks about complete political history of the subcontinent India. The protagonist Saleem Sinai he has been mysteriously hand cuffed to history. Saleem dramatizes his past life as prophecy in creation of modern India.

Central to this is the fantasy that the children born at midnight on the day of independence have special destiny as well as miraculous powers. Saleem, born at the stroke of that hour embodies the disasters of India-his very face resembles the map of partitioned India. Saleem's life covers the period from Independence to the lifting of the Emergency, but charming spots of bygone time are also visible through the "open sesame" of the perforated bedsheet. The gamut of events covered by the novel include the agitation against the Rowlatt Bill, the Jallianwala Bagh Massacre, the formation of the Indian National Army, the

dropping of the atom bombs on Japan, communal riots, the dawn of independence, the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi, the Hindu succession Act, the closing of Suez Canal, the submission of the report of the States reorganization Commission, language riots, the elections of 1957 and 1962, Chinese aggression, the Nanavati case, the theft of Hazart Bal, the liberation of Goa, the death of Nehru, the Kutch War and the Indo-Pakistan war of 1965, the Bangladesh war, and the imposition and the lifting of Emergency.

On account of Saleem's stay in Pakistan, some events of that country have also brought into focus- the rise of Ayub to power, the formation of a Combined Opposition Party, the force of the elections, the assumption of Presidency by Yahya Khan, the elections of 1970, and the repression let loose upon the eastern wing and its struggle for independence. Saleem stands in manifold relationship to history- as its twin-companion, its creator and victim, in addition to being a chronicler, a participant, and ironic overviewer and an inspired visionary. The data of his birth itself is a dividing line between old world and the new.

The second novel, *Shame*, closely parallels the pattern. Omar Khayyam Shakil's role in this novel is identical with that of Saleem Sinai in *Midnight's Children*. Omar is an unspeakable personality- fat and ugly and scandalous, an inverted voyeur married unspeakably low- a Beauty that was also a Beast, with a child's mind in a woman's body. The autobiographical material in the book is sifted to suit the requirements of the story and its unity. The partition had split Rushdie's family also. Along with his personal history, the novel focuses on the collective experience of a people and the history of a nation from the Jallianwalabagh tragedy to the Emergency promulgated by Mrs. Indira Gandhi. The narrative world begins in 1915, with the discovery of Adam Aziz in the Kashmir Valley 'in its egg shell of ice'. His life with Naseem his wife is both individual quest for freedom from the shackles of religion and the struggle of Mother India for Independence. The day Adam Aziz reaches Agra to begin his new married life on April 13, 1919, it is the day of Jallianwala bagh massacre. National history impinges on

the lives of his three daughters Alia, Mumtaz and Emerald and on his son Hanifa and Mustapha also. After the partition of the Indian subcontinent in 1947, Pakistan's insecurity as a new nation has emerged as an overriding concern for intellectuals and the international community. The force of the military, the breakdown of democracy and structures of good governance, as well as the unstable state of civil society have been critiqued in *Shame*.

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